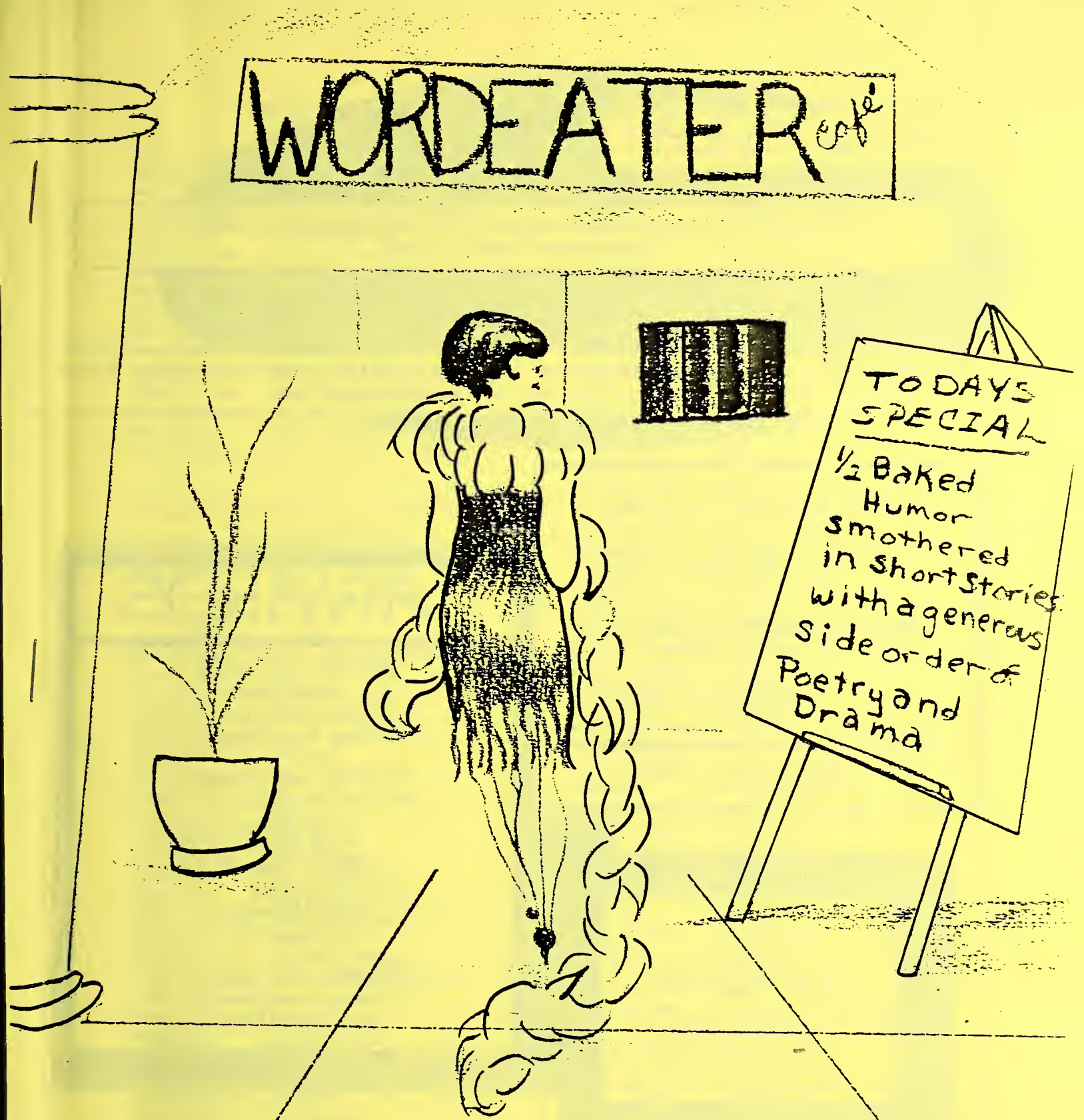
WORDEATER



#75/HOUBOLT

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

wordeater 75 staff

Holly Bruns, Steev Custer, Chris Derrick, Maria Mellinger, Dawn Simmons, John Stobart, Virginia Strouse

In order to get a selection published in this issue, four of the above had to vote for acceptance. For the award winners, only John Stobart is responsible.

Manuscripts or cover designs for

wordeater 76

must be submitted to John Stobart in room C-1069 by :

APRIL 26, 1991

Manuscripts will not be returned and SHOULD BE TYPED.

NEXT DEADLINE:

April 26, 1991

AWARDS

PROSE—$5 Each to:
Steev Custer
Maria Mellinger
Shane Van Veghel

POETRY—$5 Each to:
Lora Baker
Holly Bruns
Jeff Hicks
Bethany Jackson
Eric Jensen
Maria Mellinger
Donica Rampa

COVERS—$10 Each to:
Steev Custer (Back)
Janis Fabris (Front)

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Maria Mellinger

THE SMELL OF PATCHOULI OIL

The smell
of patchouli oil
on your sweater
that I was wearing,
The smell of the bonfire
(the backyard Indians,
You called us),
The smell of fear—
because you were
sitting so close to me
And we're not supposed
To fall in love...
This is what
Friendship smells like?

«««««»»»»»

Jeff DeGrave

SPANISH HAIKU TRILOGY

Este haiku es
para los hispanicos
en esta clase

(The next haiku has
been created to translate
the previous one)

This haiku goes out
to all of the hispanic
people in this class

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

TRY TO REMEMBER

Try to remember
A grade school field trip,
Sitting next to the first
Real person who actually said,
"I like you,"
The bus accidentally
Bumping you into each other.
Now *that* was touching.
That was love.
And the only pressure
Was that of the teacher's eyes
Separating the two of you.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

YOU ASK ME WHAT I'M THINKING

You ask me what I'm thinking and I reply,
"Little things," like,
What kind of dog will we buy
How will I ever move my things out of my parents' house
What will we do with our duplicate albums.
You ask me what I'm thinking and I think,
Anything to forget how little
Is the time that we have.

«««««»»»»»

Jeff DeGrave

YOU NOT MAKE FUN OF

You not make fun of
Oliental poetly.
Vely selious!

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

I WROTE A POEM

I wrote a poem,
and rather than read it
and knit my words
into a cloak for you to wear,
you asked
who and why and where.
Very well.
Allow me to explain.
Poetry is all about
a man named Bob
who lives in Albuquerque
because of the economic opportunities
available there.
He likes football, beef jerky, and
white Jockey shorts
line-dried and ironed after washing.
He watches 10 hours of television daily,
drinks Old Style,
and takes perverted pleasure
in the way his big toe
pokes out of his old wool socks.
And that's just the beginning...
Now I hope you can enjoy my poems,
knowing the inspiration
behind each of them.
And I hope you can keep warm
In this literary winter without a cloak,
Now that the mystery
has unraveled.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

THE NIGHT KISSED ME

The night kissed me
with his
needle sharp mosquito
tongue,
draining me of
my blood
and my love,
leaving me
dry and empty
by dawn.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

I HAVE A BRUISE

I have a bruise
From the last time we spoke,
Or rather,
Screamed.
When it was new it was like a mistake,
A funny glove on my flesh,
Part of a Halloween costume
I couldn't peel off.
When it turned blue I though of your face
And how I couldn't see your eyes,
Only a hand coming towards me;
But your eyes were probably black at that moment,
Buried in our argument
Or burnt
With lies.
And now as the bruise fades,
You fade.
Each day the skin beneath is
Less sensitive to your touch
And soon it will b healed.

«««««»»»»»

Holly Bruns

HAS ANYBODY SEEN MY NEURONS?

Frequently, I wonder how certain ideas or thoughts or pieces of knowledge can float around in a person's head and never connect themselves to each other to form something different, enlighten the owner of the contents, or just plain fall into place to make sense out of something that has never made sense. Like timid little

(continued)

neuron spiders, they cling to the attics and crawl spaces in a brain.

I know that my own neurons are playing this hide-and-seek game with me. I'd have them flogged if I could find them and put my hands on them. Or would I? Perhaps, if I could find them, it would be better to give them lots of positive reinforcement, warm fuzzies, and forgiveness for dodging me. Maybe they don't realize they're torturing me. It could be that they truly are only playing, and I just don't know how to play along. Stodgy mistress of neuron estate, and my lively, creative subjects are unable to approach me.

My limited thinking is correct, it hasn't always been like this. I believe at one time in my life I played along and knew the game quite well. As a child, I knew trees that spoke, and ghosts that lived in the bomb shelter my dad made under the basement stairs. These ghosts drank Kool-Aid and feasted on Tinker Toy/Lincoln Log stew. I was sure that my cereal pieces belonged in family groups with parents and siblings. I always swallowed at least three pieces of cereal at once, but more often I swallowed them in groups of five. Most families consisted of five members, I remember thinking, just like mine. They had to be swallowed together so none of them would die alone. It made perfect sense to me and my loyal neuron subjects quite agreed and readily played along.

I could fly back then. Although I had never been in an airplane before, I knew exactly what the earth looked like from three-thousand feet. I knew what it felt like to float on a cool easy breeze, just below the clouds. I had even mastered powerful take-offs and graceful landings. I landed in very interesting places at will.

Once, I landed at this Akron City Zoo and was immediately eaten by a black, woolly, grizzly bear. The on-lookers and by-standers were flabbergasted. I watched them tremble and stare with their mouths wide open and their eyes panicky. I made these observations while carelessly moving back and forth on the swing connected to the bear's uvula (that's that little thing that hangs down in the back of the throat). I was swinging and humming a song, watching the watchers watching the bear to see what he'd do next. I could see them through a one-way mirror conveniently installed in the bear's neck. At one point, my mother was a watcher. Crying convulsively, she called my name and reached through the bars of the cage as if she could somehow pull me back. Maybe, I thought, she should have been paying me more attention and this might not have happened. I wasn't worried. I knew I'd pass through the huge grizzly and see the light of day again just like that nickel my sister swallowed. The nickel was found a day or two later by Mom, the newly appointed poop inspector. I figured if Mom was patient, she'd find me too, in a day or two. I wanted to yell out, "Just hang on, Mom. I';; be sitting on the cold concrete floor in a couple of days and you can take me home and polish me up in the bathtub and give me lots of attention and Fig Newton cookies." But she left too soon, thinking I had been chewed to bits, never to be seen again. My mom was just too impatient and fatalistic. Or was that my dad? I get the two mixed up at times.

I guess it didn't matter to me then. I just waited to be expelled and flew somewhere else. Five years old and always on a synaptic creative mission in the land of unrestrained imagination.

I do know that it was my mother who was positively put out when she found our assortment of Tinker Toys and Lincoln Logs floating in a bucket of water. I vaguely remember her reaction.

"What is this?"

"I don't know." I didn't want to tell her it was stew for a ghost.

"What do you mean you don't know? Do you know how much money I spent on those things? You've ruined them! They will never fit together again after this. And what's this?" She walked toward the little wooden table and chairs. The table was turned over so it sat on its top so I could get inside and go boating on the open seas. The result of all the wind and waves had caused the top of the little wooden table to change from a flat surface to a nicely rounded surface. It was perfect for sailing.

I didn't respond to her question. She was getting pretty hostile at that point.

"Answer me! What are you doing with this table?"

"I was using it for a boat."

"Jesus Christ!" I know she said 'Jesus Christ' because that's what she said when she was really disgusted. "Clean this mess up right now."

So much for that. A table is a table is a table. And the same goes for Tinker Toys and Lincoln Logs. I don't think I ever played with Tinker Toys or Lincoln Logs after that. They just weren't as much fun when used the 'right way.'

I forgot how to fly long before I was ten. I can't remember any singular event that snapped the heavy-duty Master padlock on my mental castle door. Probably a combination of things. At school, bears were brown, not purple, and people had five fingers on each hand, not three. Adults filled with lots of common sense encouraged the little folks like me to put two and two together and come up with four instead of "a jillion." I just woke

(continued)

up one day in my twenties and realized I'd forgotten how to play. I bought my rights to adulthood and paid dearly for them with my imagination.

Now I wonder if I can change my mind. Drive down to the rat- and cockroach-infested pawn shop and trade something else to get my imagination and creatvity back. I hear a few bold neurons saying "GO FOR IT!" But I don't know what to bargain with. The pawn shop owners are mean, greedy mothers. They'll want one of my children or my self-respect or the movement of my body from the neck down. Maybe the selfish bastards would settle for all my worldly belongings and my ability to earn a living.

Maybe someone else has already bought it and I couldn't get it back anyway.

But wait! I've been musing aloud here in the land of neurons (or is it the land of neuroses? Mother, are you in here too?) The neurons are telling me it's not too late. They say, "Forget the old game. We have developed a NEW game and you'll like it better."

They've sent a whipping boy to deliver the bad news, however. The boy says, "Excuse me, mistress. You will like the game once you've learned it, but the rules are VERY complicated and it will take years to master them. Perhaps," he says, "more years than you have left." Shall I have the whipping boy lashed?

Well, I have something to say to this whipping boy. This brave soul who comes forward to deliver the blow of bad news.

Hew, Whipping Boy! Where do I start?"

"Maybe you could start with a creative writing course," he answers.

Hmmm...put down the whip. Give that whipping boy a bath and a Fig Newton.

«««««»»»»»

Connie Legters

THE VICTIM

The details
of grit and gore of death,
I can supply.
I have it inside
where I stuff pain.
Let me present
the shell of a man's life
washed away
in a rush of madness.

He never knew the joy
evading his reach.
False starts fell short,
and consequences were avoided.
When it became too much,
my brother withdrew
into the world of wards and patients
much like himself.
While he was there,
he wished not to be.

Coming home,
loved ones encouraged,
and tried hard to help
place him near recovery,
getting closer than he could stand.
My brother withdrew again and again,
until we gave up hope,
and he gave up us.

The desire to locate
his strength of mind, somewhere,
took him away from family love
into cities full of hiding places.
He called occasionally,
and came for bare, brief visits.
Yes, my brother had begun
to die his death,
even then.

Our last visit was good.
We laughed
and took pictures
of siblings lovingly embraced.
We counted his pills...so many.
Doctors help in the ways they can.
Then we let him return
to his live outside ours.
There he died,
his pills within arms' reach,
and my phone number beside his bed.

The anger stays
that life took him from us,
but recognition of futility
mutes the pain.

«««««»»»»»

Holly Bruns

NO WONDER I'M NUTS!

I was raised on Dr. Suess.
My mother put him in my juice.
She tucked me in with him at night,
I woke with him at morning light.

The "Cat in the Hat" was my favorite friend,
We traveled together, we're friends to the end.
We traveled to places like "Herk-Heimer Falls,"
Where "Stilt Walker" stilts were lining the walls.
We met many creatures, silly and weird,
The Cat in the Hat found one in his beard.

We feasted on tidbits like "Green Eggs and Ham,"
and toast with a coating of pickle juice jam.
When I was in trouble, I blamed it on Grinch,
My mother said "liar" and gave me a pinch.

I played in my room with "Collapsible Frink,"
But he collapsed once too often and started to stink,
So I gave him a bath in Mom's kitchen sink
and scrubbed him so hard his green became pink.
"The Cat in the Hat" said the Frink was a fink,
and didn't deserve a bath in the sink,
and beat the Frink senseless, quick as a wink,
I think the Cat's jealous. What do you think?

On my birthday I went to the land of "Katroo,"
with the "Birthday Honk-Honker," what else could I do?
The trip was a gift, a birthday donation,
From the "Katroo Happy Birthday Asso-see-eye-ation."
You wouldn't believe my mom's irritation,
When I didn't show up for her planned celebration,
To blow out the candles or eat cake decoration.

But I said to my mom, with some reservation,
The Suess in my juice, in my estimation,
Is precisely what's causing my eggs-ad-yer-ation.
If you would stop reading me such publication,
I might stop this radical hallucination.
My mother was filled with great trepidation,
An over-reaction, in my estimation.

My travels to far away places with Cat,
Continued in spite of our family spat.

I'm now a Suess junkie and there's no changing that.
I'll eat the green eggs until I am fat,
and speak in continuous rhyming chit-chat,
And sleep with my friend, "The Cat in the Hat."
My mother insisted on reading me Suess,
and now I am nothing but a crazy rexluse,
who puts Dr. Suess in her own children's juice,
'Cause I prefer him over old Mother Goose,
No wonder I'm nuts, I have an excuse!

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

AFTER YOU HAD GONE

After you had gone
I was afraid to sleep
In the bed we had shared.
The smell of our togetherness
Would have been destroyed
Byt the stench of my loneliness.
I slept on the floor instead,
My face directly upon the surfaces
You once walked on—
the very same boards that held you
when you said goodbye,
the tiles that would now have to hole me
As I walk through this house alone.
I was not comfortable,
But then, without you,
I could never be.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

WHEN WE HELD A FUNERAL

When we held a funeral in the front yard,
I shoved the neighborhood kids away,
Not for fear of having to explain death
And the proper techniques of grave-digging,
But because I feared they'd want to
Look inside the shoe-box coffin, see the
Stiff little body, and ask
If you'd get cold under all that dirt.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

BUT YOU KNOW THAT ALREADY

When one told me he loved me,
I liked that,
Because he means
He knows me.
I'm all of everything he is.

When another told me
He liked me,
I loved that,
Because he didn't know me,
But I'm part of everything he could be.

«««««»»»»»

Jeff DeGrave

THIS IS THE AMERICAN UPGRADE

This is the American upgrade of
the Japanese haiku—The Double Haiku. You know, it's bigger, stronger—MADE IN AMERICA.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

WE'LL JUST WRITE TO EACH OTHER

We'll just write to each other,
Back and forth;
It's almost like sex
When you think about it
From a wordy angle.
If we were to speak,
Our bodies
Would get in the way.

«««««»»»»»

Lora Baker

MEMORIES OF YOU

Memories of you
hang in the corners
of my mind
like sugary strands
of cobwebs.
Sometimes I want
to dust them out
but I'm afraid
of not having
anything left of you
in my life.

«««««»»»»»

Steev Custer

WILL U EVER KNOW?

I've written a million words for you, and though you read them all, you'll never know their intent.

They want to scream at you in the hall, when they see you with your head down. They want to sing to you in your dreams when you sleep, blind to the fact that I'm dreaming of you.

I've written a million words for you, and though you read them all, you'll never know my intent.

The words in my head hope that some of your genius will rub off when you shake my hand. The words in my head hope that someday you'll realize that YOU are in my poems.

«««««»»»»»

Dawn Simmons

WISH YOU WERE HERE

It was a comfortable place,
that heart of yours,
I was cradled
in its benevolent arms
and nestled
into a vast and fuzzy warmth
and was made to feel
so secure
that I never bothered
to venture around to the other side
to find you making snow angels
in a field
with someone else.

«««««»»»»»

Bethany Jackson

NOT UNLIKE

Past passion
has turned to misery
because I embraced the body of another
Who was not unlike yourself
His kisses were as hollow
His heart as empty
And I wept inside at his tough
but I returned for more
Because my mind was as superficial as yours
I thought only of the moment
the painful moment
When our trust was broken
And you lie awake sweating where I was
While I lie awake sweating where I am

«««««»»»»»

Jameson S. Turner

STRANDED

Who blesses their sneezes
These stranded doorway dwellers
At the mercy of angels
And elements of man and nature
Who'll stop and ask
Say, how much do you make an hour?
Where to, our refuse?
When down the beggars path continue
Packing unblessed sneezes
Through the high streets of the world

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

IF I MADE A CHAIN OF DAISIES

If I made a
chain of daisies
Or a wreath of
I'm sorries,
Would you sing
To me in smiles
Once again?

«««««»»»»»

Nicole L. Byrnside

LET GO

If it only be a woman's way,
And crying is your course,
Unleash your lamentation.
Reveal the ripe remorse.

Holding back the flood,
The salty stinging wash?
Let it go. Explode!
Then pick up where you left off.

You miser the depression
And let anger take control.
It seems to me you must believe
That tears are made of gold.

«««««»»»»»

David Tieman

THE SUMMER SPOKE

The summer spoke
To us that year
With beauty that masked
A cold, forgotten stare
Urging us to build sandcastles
On an empty, white-sanded beath
Forever

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

YOUR LITTLE TINMAN

Your little Tinman
Told you he had a heart,
But no tears have ever
Really rusted his steel blue eyes.
He took your box of leaves
And the Autumn that you loved
And chopped it into firewood
To warm him through the winter.

«««««»»»»»

Judy Belfield

ANOTHER YEAR IN A DAY

November spread mourning on toast
for breakfast;
I ate everything in sight
begged for more.
I am quite swollen from excess;
carry bags to remind me
what to pack
for next October's excursions
into the Wild Unknown
where I cannot take Mother
ever again.
These days, the nights take over
and yawn rudely
in the face of Disaster—
she doesn't notice.
I see it all happening
much too quickly,
retreat to this cage
where I continue to watch undisturbed
and not get involved
and not get involved

«««««»»»»»

Sue Cherven

NEMESIS II

A half hidden figure stands
in the gloom, afraid to show
his face; quietly gliding from
anyone's gaze, where to I just don't know.
Again we meet, for just one moment,
and now the moment's gone.
What do you want? Will you ever
speak? Or are you just
an illusion?

«««««»»»»»

Dawn Simmons

HEADLIGHTS

Armies of headlights
marched in a row.
For the holiday season
they were all coming home.
On my way to work
at exactly 1:22,
my headlights wished yours
would be coming home to me.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

IT TOOK A LONG TIME

It took a long time
For this magic called Real
To happen to me,
And although the Skin Horse
Promised it would always stay,
Adult rules of love
Stole it away.

«««««»»»»»

Frank Sanchez

ALMOST

Fragments of a time in
waiting cement themselves
in a cautious mind.
Piece by piece the puzzle
finds itself but one is missing.
It is lost.

«««««»»»»»

Carol Spinabella

HEAD 'O' AIR

She ran around
With every jock she met
Trying to find
Her worth as a "woman"
In jock straps
She was sure it was there
Somewhere
Like a piece of lint in her bobby sock
Which she couldn't quite locate.
In time, her feet developed callouses
She lost all sense of her womanhood
It was stolen and stashed
In the boys' locker room.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

LIKE A GHOST

Like a ghost
Dissolving into the air
Or crawling back into the
Creaking rafters
She hung herself from,
My smile
Dissolves,
My teeth liquefy,
My lips are moist
With the haunted house fear
Of your
Apparition in the room.

«««««»»»»»

Steev Custer

WORD PROCESSOR LOVE

The keys beneath my fingers spark an emotion in me that cannot be induced by pen, nor pencil.

The violent whirr of the letters branding themselves to this innocent page intoxicates me with the passion for anarchistic manipulation of my thoughts and ideas.

The keys beneath my fingers scream with hatred for their enemy, the page, and pound their fists into its stomach making me the captain on the pirate ship of words.

My crew and I, armed with adjectives, adverbs and other parts of speech, sail on our word processor gallion, over spirit master seas to rape, burglarize, and destroy towns and villages of grammatical conformity.

«««««»»»»»

Terry Rogers

ANY WEEKDAY NIGHT

On top of the stool
Billy sits
Another and another—
He never quits

Of overtime
And things gone wrong
Are usually the lines
Of Billy's song

He points at me and asks
"Don't you agree?"
I have to smile and say,
"Of course I see."

And when it gets late
And I have to close
I wonder about
What Billy knows—if I'm not busy

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

YOU HAVE WRAPPED YOURSELF

You have wrapped yourself
In a cloak of shyness
With a collar of fear,
But the soft skin of your neck
Is blushing and whispering,
"Kiss me."

«««««»»»»

Donica Rampa

KISS?

Feather light,
a flicker really—

Not meant for
what it was taken as—
and returned with
something more,

Hungry and Dangerous.

That if left free—unchained—
Unbridled,
then might, Just might
become

Heartbreak.

«««««»»»»

Tina M. Plunk

THE GIFT OF WINGS

My wings were clipped
I was tied to someone else's ways,
I couldn't soar to my own heights,
Though I wanted to...
...someday.

I'd look out into the distance
a starry look of ambition in my eyes,
Only made him add to my chains
Pulling me further down with his ties.

I freed myself when he let his guard down
But I couldn't reach the sky,
What I needed was your gift of wings
and it was then I learned to fly.

«««««»»»»

Maria Mellinger

THE UGLY GIRLS AT THE PARTY

The ugly girls at the party
Don't always turn into swans.
The barefoot boys in the country
Can't always avoid the thorns.
The quiet pains of being an adult,
Putting aside the storybooks and
Pressing your face to the glass window
Of what life is really all about,
Won't disappear when you
Fall asleep each night.

«««««»»»»

Martin Nieznanski

AZATHOTH

When I admire the celestial sphere
I often wonder
What unremembered diety
Is gazing at me with
Infinite eyes.

«««««»»»»

Bethany Jackson

HEAVEN SENT

Falling to the earth in a cloud of moondust
His eyes drip like candlewax into my soul
Teasing me with a tongue of ice
Cold taste sends shivers down my head
Melting away into a liquid dream
Misty night with air so chill
His hands take away all my will
Numbs my senses and dims my perception
Wet heat grasps my waist and spine.
A noble figure to kiss Mars
His was a gift sent from the stars
Hovering over me like a thick honey
My breath takes in his sweet essence
And his image so diving
Spinning on the edge of a blade
Waiting for me to surrender
And bond his sky with mine

«««««»»»»»

Eric Jensen

ANOTHER PROVERB

Some people see life through the lens of a
camera with no film.

«««««»»»»»

Dawn Mooney

TURNING UP THE VOLUME

Turning up the volume
Doesn't change our problems
Filling our ears
With drumbeats and guitars solos
Just gives me a bigger headache.

«««««»»»»»

Lisa Bucciarelli

ON LIFE

If you try too hard to be
DEEP
you find yourself
enveloped
in
shallowness

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

COLD AIR

Cold air,
Oil from the bridge of your nose,
Unanswered questions
Ninety-nine emotions
Tickle me with
Your lips.
Later
I'll feel guilty.
Now I'm too busy
Enjoying it all.

«««««»»»»»

Judy Belfield

EMBROIDERIES

Often
we are fooled
by words
and gestures
promising
we will never be
alone.
These are not so much
lies
as wishes.
In California
I learned that blue is
not the same everywhere
and death as illusion
is a trick on us all.
People mean well,
I guess,
the realists
and the yarn-spinners;
but I cannot tell the difference
any more...

«««««»»»»»

Jeff DeGrave

A PARADOXICAL GOODBYE

I long for you
To shorten your stay...

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

IT'S ALWAYS SO EARLY

It's always so early
When I'm told to do
The important things—
To get out of bed,
To get into my car,
To go somewhere and
Do something and
Be some alert and
Meaningful person.
I prefer the night,
When I can roam
Like a soul in a cemetery,
Studying the graves of my neighbors,
Dancing on an unclaimed
Portion of land,
Dreaming of life
And what it must be like
To live.

«««««»»»»»

Chris Derrick

MEMORIES OF GREEN

Now the season's winter
The leaves are gone away
Leaving me to ponder
Memories of green
Next spring I know
They will return
In spit of acid rain
Will the men in future time
Still say the same
Or will our legacy be these
Memories of green

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

INDEPENDENCE

I want to walk on a
Sidewalk that your feet
Have never touched.
I need to conquer
concrete.

«««««»»»»»

Jeff Hicks

QUESTIONS OF NIGHT

I look through the jet black surroundings of night
wondering what will happen by daybreak
Will the flowers open once again?
Will the shadows disappear?
Will the vampires and the werewolf
    return to their hidden solitude?
And can the sun rise before I notice it?
Am I going to catch a falling star?
    and make a wish?
What shall I wish for?
Maybe I'll look for a new friend
I'll possibly meet someone who could change my life
Maybe help me wonder
    help me dream
While we both look
    through the jet clack surroundings of night

«««««»»»»»

Holly Bruns

VERBAL METAMORPHOSIS

The words that left my mouth are not
The words that entered my head.
The things you thought you heard me say,
Are not the things I said.

I don't know how the sounds I utter,
once nebulized to air,
Transform themselves with brand new meaning,
That really were not there.

We speak a common language,
The words are very clear,
Yet still you don't hear what I've said,
They different words you hear.

I want to tell you how I feel,
Or what is on my mind,
But the verbal metamorphosis
Has made me feel confined.

I'll maintain reluctant silence,
Not discuss what causes pain,
Your preference is avoidance,
Conversation is a strain.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

DEVILS ARE WINDS

Devils are winds
Blowing change into every corner
Of my comfortable dusty room.
Demons are sunsets
Leaking their orange and purple cloud blood
Onto the clean white sheets of my bed.
Vampires are the seasons
Draining me of each emotion in turn,
My sores forever open and unhealed,
My mind forever in memory
Of the day when autumn passed.

«««««»»»»»

Shane Van Veghel

THE TREE SEEMED TO GLOW

The tree seemed to glow in its own light, lighting the entire family room.

In front of the tree, on the floor, cuddled two people sipping champagne.

The tree had what seemed to be a hundred ornaments, each home-made with loving hands. Anna had sat down the second year of their marriage and made every one of the ornaments. Christian had helped some, but he soon found that he didn't have the patient hands that Anna had.

Anna remembered the Christmas before that one, when they barely had money enough for presents. She had been depressed because they couldn't afford to decorate the tree they had bought, even though Christian said they could.

She sat in the small apartment while he ran out to get something. When he returned, he was carrying two brown paper bags. From the two bags, Christian produced ten bags of bows.

Anna had looked at them as though he was crazy. He took the two bags over to the Christmas tree which was decorated only with white lights that Christian had had forever. He reached into one of the brown bags and pulled out a bag of bows. He opened up the bag and beckoned Anna over to him. He placed a red bow in her hand and took a green one for himself. He dropped the bag and then peeled off the paper on the sticker part of the bow.

"Well, come on," he said to Anna, and then stuck the bow on a tree branch. Anna smiled. It only took an hour to finish the tree and it had actually looked really good. Anna had been cheered up.

Christian yawned and stretched. He looked up at Anna's tree. He smiled and held her close. As much as she liked their first tree, he knew this one was her favorite. She had her ornaments, and therefore, her security.

«««««»»»»»

Jeffrey Michael B

LONGING IN YOUR HOLLOW

You lost you
Into your own design
To fall too far
Is to break through the line
For all the concern,
This terrible journey,
Who can you touch
With breath, light, and love?

And here I sit
Amidst wood and decay
The others too far—
Myself in the dark—
Search for the rays of the sun.
Enter the Beast
Of bile and stench
And battle to breathe the thickened air
Wrapped warm in his belly
Under scales and fear

But, alas,
I am not you.
I can only speak of my own
Knowledge and thoughts.
I look to the moon
And hear your song;
Hear you sing
And then sigh
And then sob

Your children continue to be your beacon:
Carry you on
Into shaking heads of disbelief—
Wonder—
Joy—
I will carry you with me
To my own grave
In you I must find
The healthiest of hungers
And will always hold closely
The memory of your song

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

YOU ONCE ASKED ME

You once asked me
Why the nights are so long
And beautiful;
Why daytime is so destructive.
I answered
That midnight is when
The majority sleep
And only our fortunate eyes
Fall upon
Each other.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

EARTH DAY, 1990
CENTRAL PARK, NYC

After middle-class America had shouted her support for our dying planet, she drove home in a thousand different cars, left behind her pamphlets and pop cans, and made it home in time to watch the events' coverage on MTV. Tomorrow morning, she would open her checkbook and save the world.

Meanwhile, the bag ladies and bums that belong to the park crept out like a child's shadow does close to suppertime. They gathered the forgotten newspapers and the larger sheets of paper for blankets. The smaller pieces fit well in the holes in their shoes or as a crumpled pillow. The empty aluminum cans were collected like fine china to be traded tomorrow morning for a few cents or a free cup of coffee at the recycling center.

These are the people of Earth, brothers. We are pollution to them, and they clean up after us as well.

«««««»»»»»

Steev Custer

FLUORESCENT HEAVENS

My Father, being a small and timid man, I was never taught much self-defense. My Mother, being a peaceful woman, I was never taught how to exert my anger and stress. Not that I'm blaming this whole predicament on them, of course, but these are important factors in my life.

I enrolled at JJC with the hopes of furthering my education and escaping the blatant immaturity of those in high school who couldn't accept me for who I was. For me to say that maturity was scarce at JuCo would be astoundingly incorrect, yet I found its scarcity most abundant in certain areas of the Bridge, namely the middle. It seemed the people who ridiculed me in high school gathered there, for what purpose I really have no clue.

At first, the situation wasn't so bad, an occasional comment or two I could handle. Eventually it progressed to the point where I dreaded going from one side of the campus to another, because the only route in which to travel entailed the use of the Bridge. My enemies sat like mighty eagles, watching and waiting for their prey to wander innocently into the open, where they would swoop down with the utmost grace and tear the unknowing creature apart with their razor sharp claws.

Today, however, I would not be unprepared. The duffel bag that my brother-in-law had given me upon his dismissal from the Marine Corps, sat on my floor already packed with books and supplies I would need for the next day's classes. Without stopping to think what, exactly, I was going to do with it, I picked up the baseball bat I lovingly referred to as Livewire, and shoved it into my bag. My nine o'clock class zoomed by, as it usually does, and the time came for me to cross the Bridge on my way to Speech. I came upon the TV lounge, where several of my friends had decided to take a nap instead of going to class, and tried to prepare myself for what was yet to come. I wasn't sure, exactly, what would happen; in fact, there was a slight possibility that nothing would be said, and I would continue on about my business. On the other hand, the residents of the Bridge could also assault me with any one of a million comments ranging from my attire to my mother.

As I came upon the Memorial for American Soldiers, I could feel the adrenalin start to flow, even though I had no idea what, exactly, was yet to come. I stopped directly behind the Memorial and reacquainted myself with the position of the bat. I stepped out from the protection of the Marble Memorial, into the dragons' lair. I held my head high, for none of these people needed to see me trying to hide from their sight. Suddenly, I felt I wanted someone to say something. I wanted them to try to defy my existence, degrade my parents or my name. The comment came, as I had expected, and I immediately forgot it in the rage that filled my head. I stopped in my tracks, and a dozen or so, clad in some nauseating shade of fluorescent, rose to their feet, standing tall and proud to be finally getting what they asked for. What they would actually get, however, was not what they asked for.

As I stepped through the opening in between the

(continued)

couches, several more wise-ass comments came, but I took no heed. The boys had gathered into a small semi-circle, and waited for my retort to their feeble-minded attacks on my life. I laughed to myself, thinking how ridiculous it was that they believed there was strength in numbers when I had a Tennessee Thumper on my side. None of them even saw the bat as it came off of my duffel, in fact, no one even saw it until it met its first target and he was lying on the floor, screaming in agony.

A small crowd had gathered now, and some people were screaming, some in terror, and some in victory. Seven or eight of the semi-circle members turned and ran, most likely thanking God they had worn their running shoes. Before anyone else had a chance to move, I swung the bat again, only this time striking not only its intended victim, but a second behind me. I had no time to stop and tally the injuries I had inflicted, for there was one more scumbag standing. He snarled a long line of obscenities at me, so I have Livewire a final swing, striking him square in the stomach and throwing him to the floor.

There was a very large crowd gathered by this time, and most of them looked at me as if I were crazy. But I paid no attention. I finally felt free, as if someone had at last uncuffed me. When in all actuality, campus security was cuffing me and leading me down the corridor. I wondered if anyone would really understand why I did this. I wonder if I'll ever get the chance to do it again.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

A SIMPLE TALE

Centuries ago
The blue eyed boy stood guard
In a tall tower of Krakow.
He sighted the invading Turks
And raised his trumpet to his lips,
But the signal was silenced
When an arrow struck his throat.
Today, as it happened in days past
And as it will happen tomorrow,
A guard will open the window
Of a church tower in Krakow
And blow into his trumpet,
Stopping suddenly
As if his throat, too,
Had been struck.

«««««»»»»»

Holly Bruns

STARVATION

Sigmund Freud was familiar to me even at the age of six or seven. Dad would say, "Freud this," and "Freud that," and "Skinner this," and "Pavlov that." I thought my Dad was a handsome genius. I used to love sneaking up the stairs after I'd been tucked in, to I could catch snippets of conversation between my parents. Daddy always had something brilliant to say.

One night, when I was in the fourth grade, I heard Daddy say, "Jan, I don't understand what your problem is. You're my wife. I think you're beautiful. Why should you be embarrassed?"

"Dave, I just don't feel right about this," Mom answered.

"Fine, Jan. You asked me to tell you what I want and need. I told you. What the hell good did it do?"

Mom started crying. Mom cried a lot. In fact, Mom cried so often that we had all become desensitized to her tears.

I waited on the stairs, wondering what would be revealed about Mom's problem.

"Dave, what do you want from me?" she sniffled. She blew her nose. There was silence.

I knew my Dad. Silence meant he was thinking. Silence meant he was angry. I wondered which silence he was maintaining at that moment. I wished I could see his face.

Mom hated Dad's silence more than anything. When his silences continued for days, I had often found Mom hiding in the kitchen or the bathroom crying. When I would ask why she was crying, she frequently said, "Daddy's not talking to me."

I never understood why Mom cried about that. Sometimes I would be reminded of a phrase I'd often heard from her and Dad: "Do you want something to *really* cry about?

Silence didn't seem like a good reason to cry. I thought my Mom was a very weak woman.

"Dave, if you really want this, I'll give it a try. When do you want to do it?"

"Aren't the girls going to Girl Scout Camp next week?"

"Yes. They're leaving Saturday morning."

"Then we can drop them at the bus and leave from there."

The conversation ended abruptly. I heard Mom pick up glasses and go into the kitchen. My Dad went into the bathroom. I sat on the shadowy stairs hoping they

(continued)

weren't going somewhere to get a quick divorce like the people on TV. I let my imagination run wild with the possibilities of what would happen if they got divorced.

I was suddenly forced to cancel my eavesdropping and daydreaming when a sneaky spider on an invisible thread landed on the stair in front of me. I went to bed knowing that they were talking about getting divorced. I hadn't made any sense of their conversation. I only knew that they had disagreed about something important and I assumed it was about their marriage.

I was able to forget my worries at summer camp. I developed a painful crush on one of my counselors named "Tulip." All the camp counselors were named after flowers. Tulip was a fair-skinned, blue-eyed girl in her late teens. She had hair the color of walnut shells. The skin on her face was almost transparent and dotted with walnut-colored freckles. I stared at her whenever she was around, and blushed when she spoke to me. I wanted to touch her. I wanted to see her with her clothes off. It didn't occur to me once that what I was feeling was unusual. I didn't stop to assess the direction of my thinking. I was nine. I was in love.

Daddy had always said, "There's nothing wrong with nudity. Naked bodies are beautiful." My sisters and I believed him. We were naked every chance we got. The naked bodies of my Mom and Dad were a sight we had grown used to. I had been told the details of sexual intercourse when I was in kindergarten. I had been told about homosexuality. I knew that it was perfectly normal and acceptable for people to touch themselves in certain ways. I knew there was no Santa Claus, no Tooth Fairy, and no Easter Bunny. There was no such thing as a "dirty word." My Dad said so. Dirty words were only dirty because of the meanings people attached to them. Daddy was an atheist. We didn't believe in God. We laughed at people who did. Freud was God. Skinner was God. Pavlov was God. Daddy was God. Tulip was God.

Tulip taught me how to cook bacon and eggs in a paper bag over a campfire. They tasted great. She showed us how to make homemade ice-cream with crushed peppermint. She cooked a perfect golden marshmallow and gave it to me for my graham cracker and chocolate. Whenever I saw Tulip, I felt very hungry.

Summer camp ended and Tulip and I parted ways. She never knew I loved her and my fantasies ended before the three-hour bus ride home. The memory of an earlier conversation slipped into my brain somewhere between Cuyahoga Falls and Akron, and I wondered who I'd be living with when I got home.

Mom greeted my sisters and me with a smile and a hug. Her wedding band was still intact and she was cheerful as we drove home. My sisters and I sang our camp songs and related our camp tales. She told us that she and Dad had gone away to the mountains for a few days while we were gone, and said they'd had a good time. Daddy was home when we got there, and my anxieties were alleviated.

Daddy taught me something important when I was in the fourth grade. I had to do a project for the science fair and he volunteered to help. He took me to the University and let me pick out my own white rat. I was excited to have a rat of my own. I gave him an unusual name, like "Mouse," or "Tiger," or "Dog," and grew attached to him immediately. Dad and I built a maze for the rat and my learning experience was underway.

"Don't handle the rat too much," Dad instructed right away. "He'll get spoiled and confused. And remember, don't feed him unless he does what you want him to do. If he starts out slow, reward him after making one correct turn. After a day or two, reward him after making two correct turns. Eventually, he will learn to travel this maze in exactly the way you want him to.

I felt sorry for my rat. I thought he needed to be held. I didn't think it was kind to make him go hungry. But Daddy was a smart man. I trusted his judgment.

The rat learned his lesson well. I was proud of what I would have to show at the science fair. A week before the project was due, however, the rat escaped his confines and was lost. We never found him. Mom said the cat probably ate him. Dad got me a new rat, but the new rat didn't have time to learn the maze. My science project was presented "in theory" as Dad advised. I explained how the theory was put into effect.

The science fair judge asked me what I'd learned from my project. I recited some story about rewarding correct behavior. I didn't quite understand the theory of starvation, so I left that part out.

Toward the end of summer, a month or so after returning home from camp, I found my mother in the kitchen crying.

"What are you crying about, Mom?" I asked.

"Oh, nothing honey."

"How come you're crying about nothing?"

She didn't respond. I couldn't walk away from her. Something made me want to badger her into telling me why she was crying again.

"Is Daddy mad at you?" I asked.

"Never mind about that. Just set the table."

"Mom, you're always crying. Why are you always crying? Aren't you happy? Did someone do something to hurt your feelings? Do you wish you didn't have children sometimes?"

"No. It's not you girls. Your Dad and I are having some problems, that's all."

That's all? I wondered of they were having problems because my Dad was sick of seeing my mother cry.

"What kind of problems, Mom?"

"Well, a lot of it has to do with our sex life. It's stuff that you're too young to understand."

"I'm not too young. You've already told me about sex. Why wouldn't I understand?"

Mother stopped crying for a minute and smiled at me. "You think so?" she asked.

Dad came into the kitchen than and saw my mother had been crying. The smile was gone. She turned her reddened, puffy face and runny nose toward my Dad. He looked at her briefly, poured a glass of iced tea, and went back into his study.

Silence was like heavy smoke in the kitchen. I thought it would probably suffocate my mother and me if we didn't open a window, draw a breath of fresh air, and let in some noise.

"Mom, why do you let him treat you that way?"

"You don't know what you're talking about. You're too young to understand."

"How do *you* know?" I badgered.

"Okay, okay, you want to know? You think you'll understand? Okay. I'll tell you. Do you remember when you went to camp and your Dad and I went to the mountains? Well, while we were gone, your father paid a man to come to our hotel and have sex with me, so he could watch. and *NOW, NOW,* he won't talk to me because he wants me to do something else like that and I don't want to. Some things aren't right!"

I got the plates and glasses and silverware. I put them on the table just the way I had been taught. The spoon and the knife on the right with the knife blade toward the plate so it wouldn't cut someone. I folded the napkins "just so." My mother was silent. She wasn't crying now. I remember the scene so vividly, yet I can't remember what we at for dinner that night.

I couldn't figure out which part was wrong and which part was right. Maybe Mom had mixed it up. Or maybe it *was* wrong for people to touch themselves in certain ways. Maybe there *was* a Santa Claus after all. Maybe there *was* a God.

Sometime during the next year, my Dad brought home a little spider monkey from the University. We named him "Jo-Jo" and put diapers on him. He slept in a tiny baby bed that belonged to one of my dollies, and Mom put a board on the top so he wouldn't get out when he wasn't supposed to. Jo-Jo wasn't meant to be a family pet, in spite of what my sisters and I wanted. Daddy brought him home so he could train the monkey to use the toilet. He insisted he could make this monkey learn.

My mother nearly went crazy trying to keep up with Jo-Jo. She would be responsible for carrying out the necessary procedures when Dad was at work or at the University. I remember that the monkey pooped everywhere but the toilet and my mother became very frustrated and grouchy at times. Still, Dad insisted that the monkey would learn.

One day, we took the monkey with us to visit some friends who lived on a farm. Somehow, the monkey got up on the roof and fell. He struck his head on a rock and was killed. I didn't see this incident. My sisters and I were just told that Jo-Jo was dead and how it had happened. I thought immediately that Jo-Jo had jumped on purpose. I had a feeling that monkeys could commit suicide if they wanted to.

Eventually, Mom and Dad did divorce. Dad left Mom without giving any notice. She came home from work one day and he was gone. He packed his jogging suit and Nikes, and took off in the Volkswagen. He left her everything, including the mortgage payment. She cried for days and weeks. She said she couldn't stand the silence.

She told me, after Dad was gone, that the monkey hadn't jumped. Dad had killed the monkey himself because he couldn't stand to take it back to the University and admit his failure. Silently, I wondered if he hadn't also killed my rat. Perhaps he couldn't stand to see my success.

He called her several months later and said he would be in town around Thanksgiving and wanted to come by and pick up some things he left behind. Mom was nervous and excited. She planned a big Thanksgiving dinner and insisted we all be present.

I told my Mom I couldn't make it. I knew I wouldn't be hungry. She didn't say much. She was crying when I hung up the receiver.

«««««»»»»»

Lora Baker

LATELY MY LIFE

Lately my life is like
    a snow globe,
just as the snow settles
someone comes along
and shakes it up again.

«««««»»»»»

David Tieman

THE FOURTH OF JULY THAT MOVED TO CALIFORNIA

We met
Under the dazzling show of light
And each time
A beautiful image
Would burst into the night sky,
I could catch a moment
Of the beauty that sat beside me
In awe,
Gazing at the fireballs
That seemed to fall all around us
Like falling stars
So,
I made many wishes that night
All of which came true
But the grand finale
With brilliant colors
That soon faded
Left me alone
Searching for another heart to cling to.

«««««»»»»»

Jameson Turner

BLEEDING SOCIETY

I am the brother of this world
Pour your cup of discontent upon my head
I am not God
But I am in His image with two arms
To offer help
Rest your being in the shade of me
I am a tree
Everything to everyone I long to be
But this foul flesh limits me to stay
In but one place, one time, one mind
But curse it? I dare not
For in it find
A shelter, haven, rest
And life to seize and drink and dine

«««««»»»»»

Jeff Hicks

NONSENSE

The days are getting better now
The winds are starting to shift
Maybe I'll become a cloud
And drift and drift and drift.

«««««»»»»»

Judy Belfield

LOSS OF FAITH

We wear gray today
and drag our feet
across the tiled piazza.
Our slow procession
moves without sound
toward the fat stone church.
We do not look up
or to our sides;
our thoughts are to be
directed by Goodness;
we must meditate on holy things
as a group.
There is power in our prayer
humility in our loss of self.
I am distracted now and then—
a devil uniquely mine
breathes a cold sigh
on my neck
sings a promise softly
in my ear.
I listen
then carry my sin
past thick wooden doors
into God's house
where the priest reminds me
that there are secrets here.
"Dominus vobiscum," he chants.
I think, for a second,
there might be hope.
But even then
I knew.

«««««»»»»»

Dawn Simmons

PERHAPS

Perhaps that throughout the
entire time it happened
no one ever
saw what was happening
and it didn't make a difference
'cause we weren't the
only friends to ever fall in
love
and pretend it never happened.

«««««»»»»»

Sailor

LET THEM DREAM

Let the children dream
For one day the dreams shall fade
Let their imaginations flow today
Tomorrow logic shall rule

Let them create their own little worlds
To play in and enjoy
Soon this world shall claim them
And the dreams shall become memories

We hold on to our dreams
By encouraging the children to dream
We can go on, knowing they are happy
So please, let them dream

«««««»»»»»

Jeffrey Michael B

UNTITLED

the sky turned around to you
it pulled me over the dry, long pool
    i saw shooting stars on a cloudy night
    i held you here when you weren't in sight
    i kissed your thought in the darker light
    and looked for you above

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

VISITATION RIGHTS

I went to see the guru
Standing on the mountain top
With his eyes upon the skies
And in his hand a soda pop.
I asked him
"Do you know
If what I've done is right?"
And he answered,
"Ask me later,
It's been a rather long night."

I went to see the doctor
With his maps of body parts,
Thinking he would know the antidotes
To pains involving hearts.
I asked him
"Do you know
If what I've done is right?"
And he poked me
With a stethoscope
And blinded me with a light.

I went to see the teacher
Who had visited Walden Pond
And had studied sorcery
And possessed a magic want.
I asked him
"Do you know
If what I've done is right?"
And he answered
"I've lost my vision
And I have no second sight."

I went to see Fr. McKenzie
With his rosary and beads,
With his words and his deeds.
I asked him
"Do you know
If what I've done is right?"
And he answered
"The Devil's within you, child,
He's the cause of your plight."

Then I sat down beside myself
And turned to me and said,
"There's too much confusion here
Deep inside my head."
And I asked me
"Do you know
If what I've done is right?"
And I answered
"Honey, you worry too much.
We'll get through this life."

«««««»»»»»

Frank Sanchez

EYELENS

Sharp green lines attack the day
Sharper than any other color except maybe blue.
Vision trained to the colors, shapes and expressions.
The constant flow of people through streets, mindless
Of each other, scratching or floating, but most
Just walking, through another day.
The fields afar, yet so near: yellow-dappled green
Or multi-shaded brown reaching out, and the scents
Of the open playing upon memories.
People through streets.
Green and brown.
Oblivion within a teeming existence.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

YOU CAPTURE MY ATTENTION

You capture my attention
Like a jar full of change—
You make a pretty sound
When I shake you up,
But you're just not worth
That damn much.

«««««»»»»»

Connie Legters

MURMURS

I love
to hear wind
come round the corner
of my house,
finding old wood,
creaking gently,
soothing softly.
It murmurs
as the frame braces
for the next blast
to come.
Night will happen
while I sleep
lightly,
so not to miss
a single word
my house has to say.

«««««»»»»»

Donica Rampa

LISTEN UP

Take heed ye crows, cows and crustaceans—
for the time is at hand
When
Words Without Meaning,
Action Without Thought,
and
Existence in Pathetic Isolation
will ruin you—
make Nothing of you—
Like the Nothing you have made.
This fate be your?
Then you are beyond pity,
And so be it.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

MY CITY IS STILL

My city is still
Dark when yours
Begins to rise,
But it is midnight
To us both—
The mourning hour.

«««««»»»»»

Terry Rogers

JE JOVE LES TAMBOURS POUR 'VOUS'

When I sit alone
I think,
Of how to relax
Of what we all enjoy
That's when I feel a pulse

More than rhythm,
There's melody too
And mood plays bass

I hope that when you listen
you'll be impressed
I hope that when you listen
you'll be on your own
Most of all—I hope that you'll listen

«««««»»»»»

Eric Jensen

FROSTBITE

You live inside your ice walls
Built with bricks of humor
And transparent apathy
Do you buy yourself
With laughter
Or has it eaten
Your soul away completely

Shed a tear to save yourself
Before it's too late

«««««»»»»»

Jeff DeGrave

I MUST APOLOGIZE

I must apologize
For I am not a writer
Nor a poet
I am
Merely a curator of words—
Words from which you
Have inferred
A meaning...

«««««»»»»»

Dawn Mooney

WITH YOU

With you
I am safe from the world
Like some little girl
Protected from the monsters in her closet
I am loved and cared for
And I can love and care
Without fear of rejection
I know it's not always easy
But I'm willing to work on forever
With you

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

THE OLD INVENTOR

The old inventor,
Leaning heavily on
His ivory cane,
Spoke of parts and hearts
Machines and making love,
Inventions and intentions.
And pulling on his
Mad scientist mustache
He pointed a finger at me
And whispered, "You
Are your own creation.
Invent your own ending."

«««««»»»»»

Nicole L. Byrnside

AGAINST TIME

I smashed the clock
Against the wall;
Tried to stop the deadly ticking.
I cringed humiliation
As I saw my own reflection
In the shards of the clock's glass casing.

Though the clock was in pieces,
Still I heard the ticking.
Then a knocking sounded
clear
beneath my skull.
With the knocking came a voice;
Persistent, shouting,
Cold, demanding.
"What the Hell are you looking for today?"

What good is life
If you spend a lifetime looking
For a corner of a crevice you'll find it."

Living to be nothing
or
Never really knowing,
As wicked time slowly sifts away.

Amidst unhampered ticking,
Of one matter I was certain,
No strange voice could share
The knowledge of my shame.

The only poisoned power
That could crush
My fear of dying
Is unleashing an undying fear of living.

«««««»»»»»

Lisa Bucciarelli

A LIE IS LIKE

A lie is like
a spool of thread
that begins to unravel
as the lie is said.

«««««»»»»»

Bethany Jackson

THE HIDDEN WITHIN

Disguised in the face of my lover
Whose rough passion does send away regret
Two fangs of whitest ivory hover
Secure under twilight's silk violet

He proudly wraps his arms around the dead
And pressing his cool lips to my soft neck
He asks my virgin self to share his dread
For I cannot put evil's plan to wreck

My heart does drift in Hell's romantic fire
Where new death drips into frozen veins
Entrapping souls like rats along the mire
I am but one who found love brings more pains

In death the key to life is written lust
Do never give to loin the blood of trust

«««««»»»»»

Chris Derrick

HORRORSHOW

Life is Horasha*
Filled with delight
Life is Horrorshow
One constant fight
Reforms in the east block
Destroyed by Black Berets
Our troops near Iraq
Will surely fight in days
Rain forests in Brazil
Burn on through the night
Loggers try to kill
The last spotted owl in flight
Industries pollute the Earth
With chemicals hard to name
Gangs patrol their city turf
Searching rivals to maim
Drugs corrupt the land
The police cannot help
Problems permeate the world
Our leaders do not help
Life is horasha
Filled with delight

*Russian for "good"

«««««»»»»»

Martin Nieznanski

MANDELLA

Four arms of cloudy plumage reach
For the puddles of dust beneath
My feet, while the satin of a
Rabbit's hide covers that glowing
Part known only to myself as
The breath of some forgotten god

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

HOW, EXACTLY

How, exactly,
Does poetry "flow"?
My words are not
An Olympic-sized pool
For you to swim in.
They are small and unathletic.
My words are not
A river,
For I'm much more
Interested in mud,
And the feel of it
Between my toes.
My words are not
An ocean
Because my language
Is limited
And comfortable, actually.
My words are
Sharp little stones
That stick in your side
And so
You want them to "flow"
Far away from you.
But this is my poetry.

«««««»»»»»

Dawn Simmons

TO JAY

I'm sorry that I hurt you,
but I guess
being called a kid at heart
from a person who hates kids
made me want to
all the more.

«««««»»»»»

Lora Baker

HEAVY METAL MUSIC

(light show with lots of fog being released)
(loud ear-splitting scream)
I killed your mother and I raped your dog
(another scream)
(intense musical interlude, dude!)
(another scream followed by drum solo)

[applause followed by groupies throwing panties at lead singer and a shower of guitar pieces as guitar is being shattered by singer on stage]

«««««»»»»»

Steev Custer

HAND WRITTEN POEM 2

We shared our first
endeavor
last evening
with the midnight sun
as our only witness,
and now I'm not
sure if I'm supposed
to hold your hand
and stay
forever
or fade away
like a childhood
memory lost in
responsibility.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

YOUR EYES

Your eyes,
Across from mine
At a party
Where the people move
Like factory workers
At an assembly line,
Rip through the
Paper thin silence
Of my night
And invite
Me to dance.

«««««»»»»»

Lisa Bucciarelli

I ONCE KNEW A BOY

I once knew a boy
a beautiful young man
Much like this kite
I'm holding here today.
We used to soar above the clouds
I'd watch us in the sky.
But then he pulled away from me
And I knew no reason why.
Sometimes we flew lowly.
Others, we soared high.
But, I never never knew how low we'd go
Until he said goodbye.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

WINONA, MINNESOTA

We were driving
Twenty towns per hour,
A piece of my personality
Neatly deposited at each exit.
You were asleep.
The road was asleep.
Even our Chihuahua was
Dreaming somewhere beneath
The brake pedal.
I was awake
Trying to read the road signs,
Forgetting how to fold the map,
Forgetting myself.

«««««»»»»»

Frank Sanchez

CALL OF WINTER

Alone the land, the frozen ground,
The lifeless stretch without a sound.
From East to West, the drifts that rise,
Lie barren beneath the frozen sky.
Sunlight shines with feeble strength
Upon the crystal dusted lengths.
The sea of white into the distance fades
As the shadows of night slowly invade.
Oh! Daylight eye!
Seize the frozen sky!

«««««»»»»»

Jeff Hicks

SILENT WAGON

I sat in my silent wagon
Waiting for someone to give a push
But what was that I heard? A jet?
Yes, it was a fighter jet.
I pushed the throttle forward
The sound of turbines whined behind me
I roared off into the sky, my white scarf in the wind
I neared the enemy plane
I dipped
    I dived
        I climbed
    my guns a blazing
And as the final jet ran away
I landed my jet and sat in my silent wagon
Waiting for someone to give me a push

«««««»»»»»

Tina M. Plunk

HE PLAYED SUMMER

And he played summer with me.

From after breakfast
    to way into the sunset
We shared our lives together,
    on the swings
    in the clubhouse
    in the fields.
Living, learning, growing,
    in a summer silence.

Til,
    reality got down and
    put us in our spot

But for awhile
    He played summer with me.

«««««»»»»»

Eric Jensen

COMPANIONS

Living in fear is like living in a net.
We can see all around us but are not free.
Love is like a pair of scissors.

«««««»»»»»

Judy Belfield

PARALYSIS

My life depends
on plans I've
placed together
as carefully as puzzle pieces
yet I have no control.
I cannot even control me.
Everything
is out of hand
gone haywire
snipped free of order
and I
in the center of chaos
cannot make sense
of anything
including myself.
I write me into words
that seem to offer
limits
seem to define
rule and reason
yet fail.
I write me into plans
that follow one another
and fill time
in every tiny corner
until everything else
is squeezed out
as surely as a last breath.
Still I cannot control results
unless I do something
profoundly
irreversible.

«««««»»»»»

Steev Custer

CRACKED

"Joseph, you promised. You lied to me," she screamed. He seemed to be ignoring her, so Barbara screamed even louder. "You promised we would be together for the rest of our lives, and now you're going to walk out and forget me?"

"Yes," he replied quite calmly, "and the sooner the better." Joseph grabbed his car keys off the table and turned toward the door. She grabbed him and whirled his body to face her. She was crying now, but that had no effect on Joseph. "I'm in no mood for your childish

(continued)

sniveling." He was started to lose his temper.

Joseph turned once again and headed for the door. This time, he turned in reaction to the sound of Barbara's body hitting the floor. He walked closer to her, she was sobbing. "She's actually going to beg," he thought. Barbara slowly raised her head to look at him. Joseph stared into her eyes; she looked so helpless lying there on the floor like a child, lost from her parents, scared and alone.

He kneeled down beside her and took her into his arms. She kissed him, and he wondered why he would ever want to leave her. Joseph and Barbara made love to each other on the living room floor just six feet from the front door where, less than forty-five minutes before, Joseph had been determined to leave and never return. Now, as he lay on the floor, he felt remorseful. He decided to tell Barbara how sorry he was and how much he loved her, but she was not there. "Barbara?" he called.

There was no reply. After he second call, he felt a wave of nausea and panic sweep over him. He tried to relax, but felt in his heart that something was not right.

Suddenly, Barbara was above him, knife in hand. She was screaming something, but Joseph was too stunned to make out what it was. He felt the blade pierce his chest; his vision started to blur. He knew he had to try to make it to the phone, but he only managed to crawl two feet before he lost all strength and blacked out.

He was in a tunnel now, but no matter how hard he ran, he couldn't seem to reach the end. Joseph heard himself ask if he was going to Heaven or Hell, but there was no voice to tell him where he was. He started to worry that he would spend eternity in purgatory.

Joseph slowly opened his eyes. He was lying on the living room floor, next to Barbara, who was shaking vigorously. He dressed himself, thinking it must have been one hell of a bang for him not to even remember it. Joseph went into the kitchen and retrieved the last beer from the fridge.

On his way back to the living room, Joseph noticed that there were message on the answering machine. He pressed the play button and the machine whirred and clicked itself awake, spitting out the voice of his mother, inviting him and his new wife to dinner. The second and last message was from his best friend, Gary: "Yo, Joey, how was the trip, man? Hey, you know where to get some more when you're intereste..."

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

STURE, BIRGITTA, AND NICK RHODES— A BIZARRE LOVE TRIANGLE

Birgitta is seventeen years old. She had cool hair, usually black, but sometimes her blonde roots show. She used to be a cheerleader, B.D.D. (Before Duran Duran), and wore ponytails and miniskirts and makeup. Today, she wears either her high school uniform or her Burger King uniform with "Nick" on the name tag (she told her manager that Birgitta ia a Communist name meaning "Karl Marx is groovy.) She owns one other article of chothing—a blue satin tour jacket with "Seven and the Ragged Tiger" embroidered in thirteen different colors on the back. Birgitta's father works at the fragrance counter at Marshall Fields and her mother writes scirpts for cat food commercials.

Sture is nineteen but hasn't enlisted for the draft yet. At this point in time, he has red hair, but the five 0'clock shadow hovering on his chin is a light brown. His real name is Stanley, but he changed it when he started his job selling occult books door to door. Sture rhymes with "door." He puts applications in at every local record store once a month, but no one has ever called. His parents own a yogurt store, like some twisted real life scenario from *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, although he's never seen the movie. His favorite movie is *Patty Hearst*.

Nick Rhodes is the keyboardist for Duran Duran.

Sture loves Birgitta. Birgitta loves Nick. Nick loves strawberries and jellybeans. (Ooops. The Beatles loved jellybeans. Sorry. You may stop pelting Simon LeBon with them now.)

Birgitta and Sture met at the candle shop in the mall. Both were buying incense, which just proves how good their karma was from the beginning. She did not have enough money for her Gonesh Incense; he pressed a quarter into her hand with all the sensuality of a skinny English pop star performing a synthesizer solo. It was love.

Neither said a word as they walked to Musicland. She rarely spoke, which is why she was a grill girl at BK, and his conversations were , for the most part, held with slamming doors. Once in the store, Sture began browsing the blues section, but one glance from Birgitta forced him to forget all music except New Romantic.

That very night Sture began to study Duran Duran. Birgitta loaned him her novels, albums, and back issues of Bop, which used the word "hunk" approximately 213 times per issue. As will be revealed here for the first time anywhere, he actually hated the fave five. He hated

(continued)

their water thin bodies, their split ends, and the stupid way they tucked their ties into their shirts below the third button. He did not understand why there was a New Moon on Monday or why they didn't go get a burger if they were Hungry Like the Wolf.

He loved Birgitta, and so he suffered. She came to his house and redecorated his room with pictures of the band. Often, when they would make out, he would catch her with her eyes open staring at Nick. He gave her hickies of insecurity, in case Mr. Rhodes should happen into town.

She began to shop for his clothes, as well as choosing influential reading from the library, the perfect dance albums from the shops, and the best Miss Clairol formula to use on his head. He was introduced to all her friends and served as an escort to Duran Duran birthday parties, where each of the girls sang their favorite album in honor of the birthday boy, read stories about themselves and their Duran husbands, and ate cake and ice cream. Sture always felt awkward at such gatherings, but his silence was accepted as an adorable personality quirk of the first boyfriend in the girls' clique.

Birgitta slept with her phone off the hook, so that she could listen to Sture sleeping. One night he woke up at 3 a.m., turned on his light, and left his room to use the toilet. Birgitta woke up too, dressed in her BK uniform, and was at his house in just under five minutes, fearing he was about to sneak out to another girl.

They never did "it," because Birgitta was saving herself for the day when Nick himself would knock on her door. If Sture was a woman, he would have John Cleese's love child.

As the years passed, Duran Duran fell apart. The band fractured into solo projects and movie scores, including John Taylor's arted out debut, "I Do What I Do To Have You" from the *9-1/2 Weeks* soundtrack. Roger Taylor retired and bought a farm, Andy Taylor's hair began to resemble John Bon Jovi's, and Simon, Jon, and Nick tried to reorganize. Meanwhile, Sture and Birgitta bought leather jackets, got into the Smiths, and let their hair grow out. Having "outgrown" Nick, Birgitta vowed to learn all the words to Morrissey's first album and to always be faithful to Sture.

At junior college, Birgitta mandated Sture in a box in her advertising class, and it's commonly believed they each had an air tank filled with the other's breath for when they were separated. Once, Birgitta was cornered in the ladies room while the headbangers searched her purse, believing Sture was hidden inside. He wasn't, but they did find his underwear.

And then, finally, a freak accident occurred. Duran Duran, minus Roger and Andy, was on the comeback trail. A mistake landed them a gig at the junior college cafeteria (the theater was booked for the night). Sture and Birgitta, however, had a plan to lose their virginity that night, and the couple checked into a room at the local hotel. Duran Duran, of course, had checked into the very same hotel minutes earlier.

At 7:00 p.m., Birgitta requested a Pepsi. Sture, not wanting to ruin the mood, agreed to fetch one. Across the hall, Mr. Rhodes was experiencing the most unpleasant eyebrow tweezing of his life (so bad, in fact, that he considered simply shaving lines into them like rap artists). He left his room at 7:01 to get ice for his plucking pains.

At 7:03, as Simon LeBon slept and John Taylor did James Bond impersonations in front of a full-length mirror, Sture got lost in the hallways following his own celebrity idol, Eve Plumb, the talented actress who portrayed Jan on *The Brady Bunch*. At 7:05, as Brigitta began to file her nails in anticipation of Sture's return, Nick, too, got lost in the hotel's vastness.

Sture never suspected that as he discussed polyester and plot lines with Ms. Plumb, Nick Rhodes was knocking on his girlfriend's door.

»»«««««

Shane Van Veghel

MERETZ WAS TIRED OF STANDING

Meretz was tired of standing. It felt as though she'd been doing it forever. Carefully, she squatted down.

Meretz hated watch and its endless hours of solitude and silence. The entire affair was worthless as far as she was concerned.

She scanned the rubble below her perch. Nothing moved, there was just miles of motionless chunks of what used to be buildings. At least the dust had finally all settled, she reflected, it had made the nights so eerie. Now it was just nigh over ruins.

Meretz huddled down into her warm cloak. She wished someone would find a way to turn the power back on. But, then again, what would be the point? There wasn't anyone to run the TV and ratio stations. She doubted that they'd even be able to find any TVs or radios that still worked anyway.

The stars were out. They seemed dim. Meretz remembered when they had still shone bright, back when she still had parents. Now, she had the scavengers and she guessed they were all right, except they stuck her out on stupid watch.

(continued)

Meretz Was Tired of Standing, continued

The only things that moved out in the rubble now were four-legged, not two. Well, she figured, it wouldn't be long before her replacement showed up.

Her stomach growled and she quickly quieted it with a swig of water from her GI-Joe canteen.

Water, Meretz so desperately wanted to take a hot bath with loads of bubbles. Unfortunately, good water was scarce and the oldest of the Scavengers wouldn't let anyone waste it.

She hated being dirty. Her clothes were old and torn and she hated them too. She wanted the old days when she had pretty dresses, crisp new blue jeans and white canvas tennis shoes.

Footsteps behind her brought her back to the present. She slowly got back up and turned around. A scrawny boy, not quite her age, stood before her.

"Okay, Meretz," he said, "you can go back now." Meretz nodded.

"Be careful, Rocky," she said sarcastically.

The boy smiled, took her place and then saluted her. Meretz returned his salute and began her climb down to the ground. All the way back to homebase, all she thought about was a bowl of warm soup and a long night's sleep in warm blankets.

«««««»»»»»

Bethany Jackson

BEAUTIFUL SUICIDE

I saw suicide standing in the shadows of my mind
A beautiful man in black sardonically whispering my name
His long arms outstretched to embrace my weary body
Regret like cobwebs clung to his emaciated form.

A glint of hope reflected off of his features
It was then that I recognized the unmasked creature
The flesh of hell and beauty was smiling
Carving into cold stone my tortured destiny

Cold wind blew into my isolated soul
His breath was seeping into my skin
His form drew closer
Until he was covered with the dampness of my tears

A gloved hand caressed my face
Tempting me to fall into infinity
Then he pressed his chilled lips to mine
And I felt the silk of a coffin surround me.

«««««»»»»»

David Tieman

SMOKING SYNDROME

Relaxing
With a cigarette in my hand
Turning my teeth yellow
And my lungs black

A world of fog
Known as my room
Bright lights are shining
But they can barely see though

I look forward to the day
When I can turn on the fan,
Open the windows,
And walk away

But until then,
I'll relax with a cigarette in my hand
Turning my teeth yellow
And my lungs black

«««««»»»»»

Steev Custer

ACCOMPANIMENT: KEY OF C IN THIRDS

Every day at 3:45 she comes out of her office building, crosses the street, and enters her house, just two doors down from me. Every day at 3:45, I walk out onto my balcony and sit in the shade of my big yellow umbrella and watch her. I could study her for hours taking notes on her eyes, quizzing myself on the thoughts in her mind, experiment with what we would say if we ever met.

At precisely 4:30, she comes out of her house and waits for the bus to come sweep her off to meet friends for a movie, or meet her boyfriend for a romantic dinner by candlelight. At 4:35, the bus comes, and I go inside to enjoy a nice cold shower.

Once, a long time ago, I called her. When she answered the phone, however, I lost my courage and had to hang up before I said hello. I keep telling myself we will meet someday, but I know it's better this way. I would be too nervous and I would make her hate me, just like the rest of the world does. After my long, cold shower, I tuck myself into bed, for at the stroke of nine, she'll stroll by my window on her way to work.

«««««»»»»»

Jameson Turner

THE THREE-LEGGED JOURNEYMAN

Up the down road
Round the bend
Goes the three legg'd journeyman
Two feet solid on the path
One foot wand'ring in the grass
Hup-two Hup-two pounds his senses
Swims a river leaping fences
Signs stars sun maps
All the same
On charted roads there is no gain
Or so whispers his third leg
Now where'd it go?
Oh, back again
So while the two march stead'ly on
The third leg stops beside a pond
The two perplexed, which road to choose?
The third is climbing for a view
Ant at the journey's end this man
A traveller, weary, tho' but safe
Rethinks the path he's trodden o'er
Decides that of the distant shores
He's seen in all his wand'ring days
The third has seen the sweetest way
He casts the two, wayside they fall
Hops down the trail, and crying call
The two forgotten in the bush
And vain and unheard is their cry
Until another happens by
A traveller far from home is he
With legs all spent, near life they be
Spies in the bush the sorry pair
Great day! Such fine legs lying there
Gathers up the healthy limbs
And walks, as if at first again

«««««»»»»»

Martin Nieznanski

STRANGE

It is strange
How the world's trapped
Inside the grains
Of wood
Come to life
When you are captured
By the vices
Of boredom

«««««»»»»»

Nicole L. Byrnside

A RECIPE FOR WAR

One cup of hatred
A tablespoon of greed.
Sift in some madness
A pound of indifference.

Also you will need:

Your brother
Your uncle
Your father
Your son
and
All the body bags
You can get your hands on.

Toss them all together
and
Flambe your results
for a
Smorgasbord of unlearned lessons.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

THE POETRY PRIZE

Consonance is my cupid—
He likes me, I'm lucky.
He locks me in his arms
And stabs an arrow of vowels
Into my back.

Assonance dances with me.
He receives me in music deep
And I flee reality
In tap shoes.

Alliteration always asks
For another night
And I answer
"No, I must go,"

For rhyme is a wicked lover
Pulling me away from the others.

«««««»»»»»

Judy Belfield

SUMMATION

When the last things
are taken from my house
I will walk barefoot across the
dining room floor
and hear its complaints.
I will know again
the terrible thrum
of wasted dancings
from the beginning
to this place;
in between there were moments
of joy
my ignorance allowed—
they have all dissolved.
When the last things are
wrenched from their places
I will hear them gasp;
I will be so sorry.

«««««»»»»»

Holly Bruns

COCKTAIL PARTY CONVERSATIONS

The Bullshit Elite Philharmonic,
think polite conversation symphonic.
Discussions are never laconic,
They lull me to sleep like a tonic.
But somehow I find it ironic,
My attraction to them is quite chronic.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

MY LITTLE SAWDUST HEART

My little sawdust heart
Was tired,
My coat threadbare,
And I dreamed of a dress
Like the nursery Magic Fairy's—
A dress of pearl and dew drops
With the power to warm me—
But instead I awoke
To your kiss,
Sweet as the fruit from
The raspberry thicket
And Real as I wanted to be.

«««««»»»»»

Frank Sanchez

THE MATTER OF ME

Wanderlust rises, rages, scorches
    every atom of my being,
consuming the obtainable moment
    No time left for dreams.
Unknown shores seethe ceaselessly
    upon a barren Earth.
Starry sky and choppy seas
    awaiting a new birth.
My eyes rise to the skies
    wrought with the weight of tears,
placed there by uncertainty,
    afflicted with timeless fears.
A shadow of who I was
    with a figure of who I'll be,
plead for an answer
    to settle the matter of me.

«««««»»»»»

Terry Rogers

DREAM OUTBACK

Wild dogs hunt—somewhere
Red lizards click or hiss
While crickets hold chorus.

I have everything for awhile
With God at my side.
I'm thinking much clearer
Keeping tempo with a stick.

Mostly sandwiches that I've packed
I'm sure that I can't hunt
I even have some soda
To offer up, like a kill.

Sweat in the darkness
I'm really quite surprised.
It is very cold
But I am very close now.

Laying on my back
Waiting for the times
    when the clouds part
The stars to see, to let be.

«««««»»»»»

Jeffrey Michael B

CREDO
(CITIES IN DUST)

the city was alivè with light
Innocent to the bustle within
like an ignorant child at play,
She breathed in and sighed.
the city was built on a lake
Feeding her night and day
new in the garden,
She swam out endlessly.
her lights gleamed without end
The city found many acquaintances
tourism flourished and the economy burst
Peace between races and sides.
her crime was low—the youths occupied
She had harmony
this city was harmony
And her insides delighted.
but people grew careless
The factories dumped
her factories and peoples—waste
The government found greed.
the citizens met crime
The green life forfeited for black metal
her people overspent—wanted too much—
Experienced all none responsibility.
She was beautiful fro afar
She was perfect from afar
She was ugly and defiled inside
She was dying and old inside.
Everyone got a piece
Everyone played her up
She was stupid, tainted,
And, still—innocent.
But unpure and prostituted
Exploited, tossed away
But She is human, and
I caused everything.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

I TRY TO REMEMBER OUR PAST

I try to remember our past
And fantasize our future
But the present is a
Spoiled little boy
Pulling on my coat sleeve
And begging for my love.

«««««»»»»

Jeff DeGrave

MY FRIEND SEINE

(WARNING: The following poem contains French pronunciations. Pronounce such words as follows:
Seine="sen"
Notre Dame="No truh Dom"
femme="fom"
Cite="see-tay"
Louvre="Loov"

I stare into space with my nose at the glass
Hypnotically adrift in yesterday's past.
My face at the window, like on that old DC-9
Before I knew you from the Rhone or the Rhine.
Do you think of me and remember when?

Goodbye, my friend, River Seine.
When will I see you again?
It's these silver rains that remind me of then.
Goodbye, my friend, River Seine...

We first met at night just beyond Notre Dame
When you waved me away from some Parisian femme.
You flowed through Cite at your own prescribed pace
Motionless for a moment so we'd meet face to face.
Some two-odd years ago, it must have been...

Goodbye, my friend, River Seine
When will I see you again?
It's these silver rains that remind me of then.
Goodbye, my friend, River Seine.

I'd lean on the bridge as the current would move—
An impression in blue, you'd water-color the Louvre.
You could do it all with only babbles for words,
But the message you told me was like none that I'd heard.
If only those hours we could suspend...

Goodbye, my friend, River Seine,
When will I see you again?
It's these silver rains that remind me of then.
Goodbye, my friend, River Seine.

Thinking back how I slaved and saved five-thousand francs.
The richest mem'ry of all was sitting freely on your banks.
But today I sit and glare into this grey
Believing tomorrow can repeat yesterday.
Someday soon this rain will end...

Goodbye, my friend, River Seine.
Will you still be the same as you were back then?
Maybe, someday, I can't say when,
Hello, my friend, River Seine,
Bonjour, mon ami, Fleuve Seine...

«««««»»»»

Bethany Jackson

700 WAYS TO DIE

Can't make it through any more
A twisted word and a twisted soul
Soundless cries drive me to the floor
My heart is little more than an empty hole

A void I though you could fill
Break open my protective shell
All you've done is take away my will
Send me through 700 shades of hell

Push away my smiles and tears
I can't understand you
Can't understand these horrible fears
What is left to do?

Open my veins to the night
Give you my sorrows to pine
Because I have no desire to fight
This depressive coat of mine

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

MY YOUNG FRIEND

My young friend turned to me in awe.
"You have an *alley*?" he asked,
So full of wonder that yesterday's neighborhoods
Are being lived in today; that they are not
A yellowed photo secured in an ancient album
With pieces of crackling tape.
At only 20, I pity the young
For their lack of backyard jungles and
Front porch dungeons and someone's
Great Grandmother's name scratched into the
Hard wood floors of a corner bedroom.

«««««»»»»»

David Tieman

UNTITLED

Southern Kansas in the midst of June
A little boy is tired of feeling blue
He's got a knife in his pocket
And a gun in his hand
Sick of living in a place
He doesn't understand

«««««»»»»»

Dawn Mooney

ISN'T IT STRANGE?

Isn't it strange
How one tiny, insignificant event
Can ruin your entire day?
Or how one wrong word
Can send your spirits
Spiraling downward
Or how the taunting voice
Of a busy signal
Can drive you to frustrated insanity
(Or is it just an insane frustration?)
Isn't it strange
How I want to hit my head against the wall
And scream obscenities
And throw heavy objects
But all I do is isolate myself
And write a poem.
(Maybe I should try throwing things.)

«««««»»»»»

Holly Bruns

WINTER BLAHS

Roadside snow, slushy and grey,
Melting onto surface where I walk,
Seeping through the leather of my shoes,
Channeling through the pores of my skin,
Merging with my blood through osmosis, then
Uniting with my soul.
I should have worn galoshes.

«««««»»»»»

Donica Rampa

GONE

They say when love dies
you cry a thousand rivers
as if there were no tomorrow.
They say your heart is broken
as you drown in deepest sorrow.

They say there is an emptiness,
a cavern in your soul—
Your heart is full of loneliness—
a dark and empty hole.

But as he walks away from me,
as dusk turns into dawn—
I have no tears to cry for him—
Only glad that he is gone.

«««««»»»»»

Martin Nieznanski

BRAINWASHED

My cortex was unraveled and
Given to scurrying hands that
Held styluses
Used for rewriting the epic of
My personality on my
Unwound frayed brain.

«««««»»»»»

Terry Rogers

SEPTEMBER 1988

On the silent wings of love
Where we challenge the challenge of being one
Scorned by the being of everyone
Helpless to the bittersweet taste of idle time

On the silent wings of love
We reach with paralyzed motion—
Only to watch talk take all command
Afraid to say "goodbye" to youth
We scamper to pick up pieces of puzzles
that deserve no completions.

On the silent wings of love
We hold on for the ride
Too timid and mindless
To fly our own course

On the thunderous wings of love
We hold our ears and close our eyes—
Too afraid of the beauty of it all

«««««»»»»»

Jeff Hicks

CHILD'S PLAY

To taste the air of a distant realm
To explore the mysteries of your own backyard
To make a marble into a crystal ball
To fly in space
Or hide in your fort
of sofa cushions
Using the ideas of a five year old
Reality is nothing more than child's play.

«««««»»»»»

Tina M. Plunk

GOING EAST ON INTERSTATE 80

Going east on Interstate 80
only a few miles more to my exit
where I get off
to go home.
I miss your laugh
and how your smile warms me.
How I want to keep going on to you.
It would only take
a couple of hours.
Long hours I know...

But I turn south and head home.
Walk in the door
and feel so wrong.
"Where have you been?"
He asks roughly
I begin to cry
My heart is still going east
on Interstate 80.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

SOMEWHERE OFF OF COUNTY LINE ROAD

Although we're supposed to be adults
And face this relationship in
Stuffy established time honored ways,
I'm having more fun parking
Where the prom queens hide
And kissing through my Saturdays.

«««««»»»»»

Holly Bruns

HIDDEN IN A PLASTIC GROOVE

Spin the record.
Let it play out the recalled pieces of my past.
Each song connected to something I once could touch.
History pulled from sound.
Floating bits of who I was,
all the stages of my life.
Invisibly cut into grooves of plastic.
I'm found again,
under the pressure of a needle,
with a diamond tip.

«««««»»»»»

Eric Jensen

A SOLITARY SHADOW

Angel of the night
Teases me with light
Calls me to her side
To vanish from my sight

Hides beneath the day
Leads me far away
Shows me where to hide
Needs not a word to say

She sails by too fast
One shadow to cast
Whispers she's my bride
And captures my past

«««««»»»»»

Chris Derrick

I STILL BELIEVE

I do not believe in a Supreme Being
I misplaced that last night
I do not believe our leaders are right
I have seen too much corruption
I do not believe our future is bright
I have seen too much destruction
I do not believe that good always wins
I have seen it fail quite often
I just believe that I must do
What I believe that I must do
What I believe is right and true
In spite of how some others act
I still believe that that is fact

«««««»»»»»

Dawn Mooney

MEMENTOS LEFT ASTRAY

Momentos left astray
Artifacts from
Someone else's museum
Now remind me
Of events
And emotions
Long over
Yet I hold onto
My collection of the past

«««««»»»»»

Jeff Hicks

TECHNICOLOR SILENCE

In my arms
You fell asleep
And all I could do
    was look at your face
In it I see rest
I see your dreams coming alive
In vivid color
    in my mind
Red,
Yellow,
Blue,
Green,
I brush the hair
    from your closed eyes
I feel the softness of your skin
You roll over
You reach over
    and pull yourself closer
I feel your warmth
I lean back and close my eyes
And slowly join you in your technicolor dreams.

«««««»»»»»

Steev Custer

PUNK ROCK LOVE POEM OR MORRISSEY SINGS THE BLUES

I'm wondering where you are as I carve your initials into the silky flesh just below the base of my left hand.

The Smiths record you brought me whispers to me as I sit in the darkness of my basement room, wondering if you are mourning the loss of this magnificent love too.

Shortly after you left me, I dressed myself in black from head to to and lit candles in remembrance of the wonderful times we spent together, stealing tapes from the record store, swearing at old people at the mall, and shaving our heads to show the world our love for each other. As I recall all these acts of passion, I suddenly realize that we had a stronger love than even I understood.

Now I'll take myself off to bed, for tomorrow I'll dress in black again, and walk past your house to try and catch a glimpse of you, or maybe I'll follow you to work or to your friends' houses to see how many times you notice me, and give me a speech on how immature I am. GOD, I LOVE YOU.

«««««»»»»»

Jeff DeGrave

THERE'S THAT BIG, BLACK TRUNK

There's that big, black trunk
that sits in the corner of my closet.
It probably knows more about me than I do.
It hides those high school days,
The days of my first apartment
And the days of reckless abandon since.
I'd love to open it
and listen to those stories
all over again,
But someone might be listening...

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

YOU WERE SUCH A PRETTY BOY

You were such a pretty boy
With your closed eyes and your
Dancing body that never left the
Chair in the corner of the bar.
Jazz kissed your forehead
Like the girl you could never have
And sweet cigarettes held your hand.
Draft beer eased you into dreams
AS you eased your too young body
Into the bed in your parents' home,
Imagining the day when you
Would see icebergs and whales
Swimming between Alaska and Russia
And kiss the cold air above the ocean,
Brushing away the grime of our little town
That nightly touches your lips.

«««««»»»»»

Steev Custer

IF I COULD ONLY SAY HELLO

If I could only just say hello

If I could only just walk up to her and tell her how I feel, than maybe I wouldn't be so hollow on the inside.

She would be everything in the universe. She would be everything I've always wanted everything to be. She would be the echo of my screams, the answer to my questions, the shaft of light from which the universe revolves.

If I could only say hello.

«««««»»»»»

David Tieman

LOTTERY LOSER

In the mist
That fell
From the sky
Glittering
In the presence of a streetlight
Like raindrops
Only softer
And less outspoken,
A long-haired man
Carrying the losing ticket
Of a recent Vietnamese lottery
Walked in silence
And darkness
Down a bumpy path
Which was created
For only the single shining eye
Of a train
To see.

«««««»»»»»

Donica Rampa

BUBBLE-GUM PINK

Bubble-gum pink and candy hearts,
Laughter rippling like a stream,
Melodic voices stop and start,
Content to sit and dream.
Up and down with ebbs of emotion
like the glittering waves of a golden ocean.
A glance, a grin, a silly giggle—
laughter carefree, like a puppy's wiggle.
Reds and purples and baby blues,
colors bursting in joyful hues.
A snicker, snort, chuckle, wink—
Candy hearts and bubble-gum pink.

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

HE LOADED UP HIS SIX GUNS

He loaded up his six guns
Packed a metaphor a minute,
Gave me a simile—
or was it a smile?—
Rapid fired images into the air
And named one after me.

«««««»»»»»

Martin Nieznanski

THE DREAM CATCHER

The wicked thoughts that lurk behind my eyes
Sometimes
While I sleep
Become ensnared in its spider-like web
And, as a black stone, climbs downward
Where it falls off a feather
As a silver drop of morning

«««««»»»»»

David Tieman

I

I
was awake for days
worrying,
torturing myself to find an answer
that I thought was lost
Now
I rest
quietly, calmly
with my eyes closed
enjoying the dreams
that I have created

«««««»»»»»

David Tieman

THE CANDY STORE

Sweet and sticky
Sexual candy
An assortment of flavors to choose from

Tempting, tasty
Hot and spicy
An extravaganza of taste on your tongue

So many sizes
So many shapes
I believe I have fallen in love

With

Suckers and lollipops
Rock candy, lemon drops
And the infamous everlasting gum.

«««««»»»»»

Dawn Simmons

DEAR ABBY

Dear Abby,

I have been happily married to "Bo" for five years. However, I am in love with his best friend's sister's third cousin's dentist's niece's prom date's neighbor.

We secretly call each other at work once a week, and we only see each other once every six months at the best friend's sister's third cousin's dentist's office.

Abby, I thought for sure that we would never be found out, but I was wrong. What should I do?

Signed
"Bo" Knows

Dear "Bo,"

Just do it!

«««««»»»»»

Eric Jensen

INWARD FORMLESSNESS

I have a shape
I have a name
I have a face
To hide my brain

I see the world
I feel the cold
Raised to know
I'll soon grow old

I need to find
A place inside
To give me time
And lead the ride

«««««»»»»»

Maria Mellinger

HE COUGHED UP INTELLIGENCE

He coughed up intelligence
Choked on laughter
Tripped on his ego
And fell to the floor.
We all noticed
But didn't move to help him
Because we enjoyed the
Idiotic silence
So much more.

«««««»»»»»

Jeffrey Michael B

BEKRIVES (Selected Verses)

IX
Edge my knife
With the colors and visions
Of bursting seashells
Of forgotten shores
An opening—yes!—
An opening of wings
Take flight into the sightless beauty
Of scales and more
Of ornate headdress
(Like the peacock, it sings)
Show us your splendor—
Edge my knife

XII
Do I see Heaven or Earth
    Above me?
Is Hell, my penitence served?
I want to ascend the bedrock—
    My cell—(to feel the winds of life again!)
Although I cannot feel,
I see this light;
This heat
Amazed and puzzled
I await my fate

XV
This house on water
Floats silently through the night
Under the whole of the moon.
    And is suspended for eternity
    And is suspended for all to see
    Save for the dying grace of thee

XXII
Of a thousand roses
She makes her soul
Whirling through the air
Like the dust.
And her train behind—
Banners and ribbons.
In this empty room
She is married to the sunlight

XXIII
I long to meet her lips with mine
But the ice that she is made of
Quietly folds over—and all that remains
Is her shadow glistening with frost.

«««««»»»»»

Donica Rampa

COLD FIRE

The flame within me rises,
like an ocean swell,
the heat is like to drown me—
I know it, know it well.

'Tis like a demon's hellfire
or Neptune's icy fish,
Like lava, hot and flowing,
through an ocean mist.

To move and ebb in nature
Ride waves and walk through fires.
Tumbling with every riptide,
flaring with that of pyres.

This is life, and I am living,
savoring each moment.
A scorching wave or cool wet flame—
glad that I have known it.

«««««»»»»»

Dawn Simmons

RED LEAF

We spent that Autumn together
with colorful laughter
and smiles
that glowed with the setting sun
and the rising moon
and became camouflaged
into the leaves
that danced circles
around our icy cold feet.
And one year later
the sight of a single
red leaf
shivering on the pavement
brings back
every enchanting memory
that I was sure I had
forgotten.

«««««»»»»»

Steev Custer

CALAMITY

Sam had always told me to call him when the thoughts came, or when I was scared, but my parents couldn't afford to pay him right now, so I just decided to stay right where I was. After all, I thought, I'd been here when I lost my first

(continued)

love, I've been here when I was too sick to leave the house, and I had been here for all the other major catastrophes that seemed to plague my incredibly unnatural life.

Oftentimes I lay here and think that, when the good times are so few and far between, my blankets will protect me from the atrocious episodes which seem to contaminate my existence. I sometimes wonder if my pillow absorbs my each and every tear and incorporates them into its comfort and reassurance. I suspect that one day I'll waken here in my bed, and find myself incapable of leaving its security and warmth. Maybe, just maybe, that day is Today.

«««««»»»»»

Holly Bruns

SYNTHETIC TOMB

I want order.
I demand order.
No more chaos.
Just order.
I must straighten,
and organize,
and wipe away the dust.

Make it clean.
Everything in its place.
Wrap it in cellophane, quick,
before the dust has time to return.

Draw the blinds, just so.
Keep the sun off the fabric.
Keep my life hidden indoors.
If you draw the blinds just so,
Neighbors and friends looking in
Will see only the bare white ceiling.
Clean.
White.

Straighten the portraits on the wall.
Lopsided portraits are intolerable.
Straighten them carefully.
I don't want fingerprints,
on the portraits,
or the gilded frames and glass
encasing them.

Give me
clean white
order.

«««««»»»»»

David Tieman

SHE'S GOT THE BLUES

I saw her standin' in the neon lights
on the corner by the liquor store
Not a dime in the bottom of her blue jean pockets
and a child waitin' to be born

Underneath her worn and faded jacket
lie a bottle from the night before
It was filled to the top with memories
of love that was shattered and torn

She's got the blues

Livin' in and out of doorways
she never had a place called home
Fell asleep under the stars at night
so she never was really alone

But sometimes she's lie and wonder
if there was a place where dreams come true
Just a date with a bottle of Southern Comfort
and her best friends, Rhythm and Blues

I saw her standin' in the neon lights
on the corner by the liquor store
Not a dime in the bottom of her blue jean pockets
she felt she could live no more

«««««»»»»»

Holly Bruns

AM I ERSATZ DRAGON, OR IS IT YOU?

You are someone I've come to know.
That quasi-confident, sanguine laugh,
Those pseudo-intellect, hollow phrases,
I once thought funny and powerful,
Are nothing more than a smoke screen
Blown out through your mouth and nose
Without passion or heat.
A cool, smoky, audible fear
Of my honest probing of who you are,
Deep inside.
A simple dragon looming large,
Without his flaming breath,
To face the sword of truth.
Just smoke,
To choke,
And make my eyes water.

«««««»»»»»

Holly Bruns

LITTLE BROWN BABY

I held a little brown baby today;
A clinging, brown-eyed, little brown baby, today.
He pulled his brown baby arms around my neck
and held on tight.
He laid his beautiful bristly head on my shoulder
close to my neck,
Where my heartbeat could be measured by touch.
He held on to me like my own babies never did.
I loved that baby at once.
I loved the smell of him.
Loved him in a way I never loved my own babies.
We held each other tight,
And interlaced our souls for only minutes, but
I became brown in those minutes.
I was one with that baby.
He didn't seem to mind my pinkness.
Our souls danced in a color of their own.
An hour later, when the baby was gone, my soul still
felt the brownness wrapping tightly around it.
Fusing with pink.
My soul is no longer pink.
I loved that little brown baby today.

«««««»»»»»

David Tieman

BUBBLES

I was inside a bubble
For weeks
Formed by a child
With a bottle of soapy water
Who loved to chase them
And
Pop them
But
He could not reach the one that surrounded me
And
I was caught by the wind
Only realizing today
That I possess a pin

«««««»»»»»

Eric Jensen

UNCONSCIOUS TOMORROW

A lie that began as a promise,
Hangs heavily in our minds,
A time that began as a vision,
Reminds us of the signs.

The thought of a world without life,

Like the thought of space without time,
The shadow that wanders our future,
Blocked out by a sun that won't shine.

«««««»»»»»

Steev Custer

I REMEMBER HOME...

"Do you remember when, not long ago?
It was a place where all the kids could go.
It was the place that got us our start, and the sound
still rings in our ears and in our hearts.
Thanks to everyone who saw and felt and cared, it's
the end now, still I'm glad I was there..."

Fractured Adolescents

I remember Home, with its seemingly magical disco lights that held hands and danced with us over checker board tiled floors.

The music screamed out of gargantuan speaker columns at 150,000 decibels, uniting us in hatred for the outside world.

I remember all the friends that lied, and that most of cried at least once, and some of us even more.

Most of all, I remember people that said, "You guys sound really good," even when we sounded like shit.

But other than the friends and enemies, music and good times, I know I'll always remember everything, because I remember Home.

«««««»»»»»

Jeff DeGrave

WHY WOULD A MAN CLIMB A MOUNTAIN?

Why would a man climb a mountain?
Because it is there.
Why would a man walk a straight line?
Because he has to.
Why would a man listen to a woman?
Because she is there, telling him he has to...

«««««»»»»»

Jeff Hicks

DANCE

Paint your land with watercolors
Dabble in the oils to paint your skies
Dust the wind the tint of your skin
Cleanse the open boundaries with your eyes

Show me the distance
Show me the way
Stopping nighttime
Day after day

Give me a hint of friendship
And I'll give you all respect
Always working way too hard
Something there to always fret

In your hand you hold my heart
Do with it what you may
The harder you hold on to it
The longer that I'll stay

Dance the dance of running water
Wear the shoes of an older man
I'll teach you the steps of the running water
Any way that I possibly can

You tell the clouds to go away
Hoping the dreaming just might last
You feel the wind running past your face
Gaining speed, don't move too fast

I wish your future
I know your past
It doesn't matter
It's the dreams that last

So paint your color picture
Dabble in the blue
Please remember me
For I'll always remember you

«««««»»»»»

Bethany Jackson

ALONE WITH HIM (THE BLACK ROSE)

Licking sugar from his fingertips he bids me to follow
His heart and his step are hollow
As he wanders into a path overgrown with brown grass
It is difficult for me to pass
The temptation of the twilight and of him
Of the weeds and growth that beg for a trim
Catching an air of his sweetness ahead
I allow myself to be led
Into the stench of a decaying thick
I see a black rose I desire to pick
Afraid of the thorns and of losing my guide
I leave the flower and step aside
To where I last glimpsed his romantic cape
But I fear I've lost sight of his lanky shape
Dressed in black like the rose
Then a euphoric scent tempts my nose
He is not far from me
His form stands beyond a willow tree
Afraid of the thorns and of losing my guide
Gingerly I step away and try to hide

«««««»»»»»

David Tieman

NOTHING

No walls
No life
No evermore
No place to wander
No peace or war

Just nothing, but nothing, but nothing

No worries
No pressures
Of what we must be
No one to look up to
Or recoil in envy

Just nothing, but nothing, but nothing

I know something you don't know
Can't help flaunting a grin
It doesn't exist
But no one knows
I know the way in...

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WEIRDEATERS

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